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ABSTRACT

The annual survey of the Joint National Committee for Languages (JNCL) and National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Languages (NCSSFL) assessed state-level support for foreign language, bilingual, and English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) education. Respondents were 78 employees within state departments of education and state language associations. Results indicate two-thirds of state departments of education had downsized, with language program personnel experiencing significant job losses, an average of 17 percent. Staff whose tasks are primarily or directly related to foreign language instruction averaged 1.3; the figure doubled for bilingual and ESL education. Funds were specifically allocated for foreign language programs in 73 percent of states, with average funding about level with the previous year. Fewer states allocated funds for bilingual and ESL education, but amounts were substantially higher. Respondents felt their policymakers gave the most support to foreign language programs, in both rhetoric and action, at 35.5 percent, with bilingual education receiving 23.4 percent and ESL receiving 31 percent. States reporting the most communication between state language associations and department of education also reported high agreement on policy issues. ESL and foreign language associations were more active in advocacy efforts than bilingual education counterparts, but inter-association coordination of efforts was limited. (MSE)

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ED 407 852

1996 JNCL ANNUAL STATE SURVEY

An Assessment of Support for Foreign Languages, Bilingual Education, and English as a Second Language

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JNCL-NCLIS

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The annual survey of the states is conducted by the Joint National Committee for Languages in Cooperation with the National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Languages

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The 1996 JNCL/NCSSFL State Survey was designed to assess support for foreign languages, bilingual education, and English as a second language (ESL) at the state level. In August 1996, two hundred and fifty surveys were distributed to foreign language supervisors, state foreign language association presidents, bilingual and ESL educators and TESOL affiliates in all fifty states. Seventy-eight, or 31% of the surveys sent out were returned. Of those returned, 76% were from staff members within state departments of education. The remaining 24% of completed surveys came from state language associations. There were many special circumstances affecting the data collected, among them were: fiscal year differences, budgetary difficulties, staff turnover, and political sensitivities. Also, the original guarantee of confidentiality may have affected some of the data. States reporting significantly higher or lower figures than the median responses could not be singled out and identified as having skewed the average. Nor could they be responsibly ignored. In the end, all responses were given equal weight in the survey report.

It is important to note that as averages, these figures may incompletely reflect the support given to particular programs within each state. Factors such as local and federal funding, how recent or established a program is, and program popularity and demand within each state were not considered in this survey. As such, these results are best used as a tool to gauge the extent of support rather than the degree of a program's success. While bilingual education and ESL programs fared better than foreign language education in terms of staffing and state funding, the two were far less likely to receive consistent public support from policy makers and the states' departments of education. This indicates that no program enjoys both full financial and rhetorical support from its state policy makers.

Within the context of public dialogue, the greatest supporters of all language programs were the boards of education. Legislators were more highly critical, and conspicuously absent from the discussion were the state governors. Nearly half of all respondents reported "no comment" positions by the governors on all language matters. This demonstrates an overwhelming need for improved information and increased attention at the state executive level. In addition to the need for increased advocacy, more coalition building and cooperation between language programs is sorely needed. Less than one-third of all respondents reported collaborative efforts between bilingual education, ESL and foreign language education on the state level. This may be a result of perceived competition for funding and support; however, of those states who did participate in cooperative efforts within their language communities, over 80% reported successful outcomes for all participants.

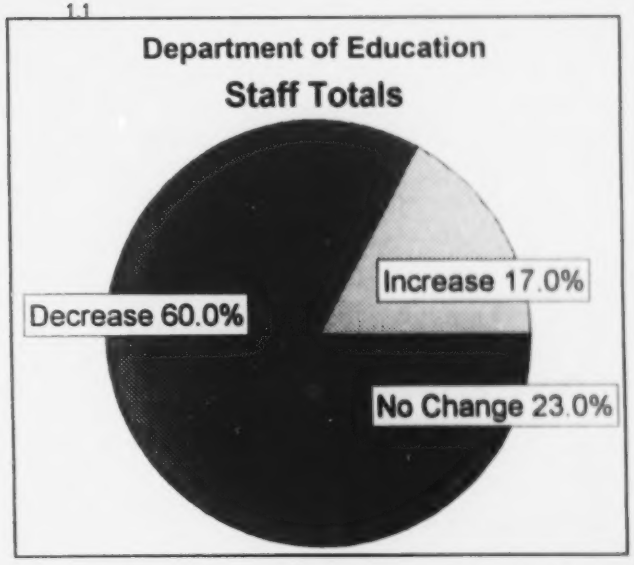
A final conclusion from the survey's results is the amount of uncertainty and insecurity currently existing in the language profession. Despite written assurances of strict confidentiality, 24% of those surveyed still submitted written requests for anonymity. Some respondents (from varying geographic locations and language specialties) specifically declined to answer portions of the survey, citing fear of reprisal as their motivation. This appears to demonstrate an anxiety that should not be overlooked.

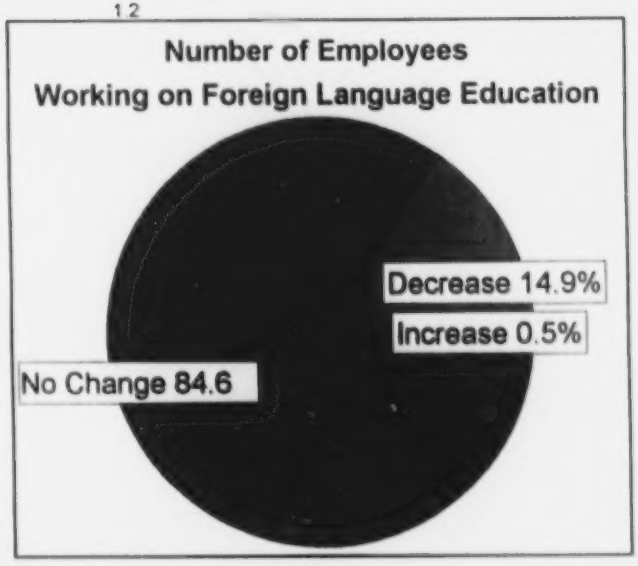
Part I --Staff

Tracking staff changes in foreign language, bilingual education and ESL within state departments of education is one way to quantify the level of support for language programs. In part I of the survey, respondents were asked to cite the total number of personnel in their state department of education, the number of employees whose primary tasks are directly or indirectly related to language education programs, and whether the two numbers indicated an increase, decrease or no change from the previous fiscal year.

The average number of employees within the states' departments of education was slightly over four hundred and seven. As a national trend, nearly two thirds of all state departments of education downsized their total staff numbers in the last fiscal year (figure 1.1). In relation to this downsizing, language program personal represented a relatively small (less than 3%) number, but nevertheless a significant number of job losses. Within the last fiscal year, language programs within the states' departments of education lost an average of 17% of their personnel (see figs. 1.2; 2.1 & 3.1).

There was an average of 1.3 staff members in the states' departments of education whose primary tasks were reported to be directly or indirectly related to foreign language instruction. This figure doubled for bilingual education and ESL. Of the staff members with multiple program responsibilities, 25% of their time was reportedly spent on foreign language (fig. 1.3), just over half on bilingual education (fig. 2.2), and 45% on ESL (fig. 3.2). The survey did not inquire who determined the distribution of time.





Figures 1.1 and 1.2 indicate the staffing trends at the State Departments of Education from one fiscal year to the next. The average number of staff in the State Department of Education was 407 persons. Overwhelmingly, this figure marked a decrease from the last fiscal year, although the average number of persons whose primary tasks were either directly or indirectly related to foreign language education programs did not change significantly.

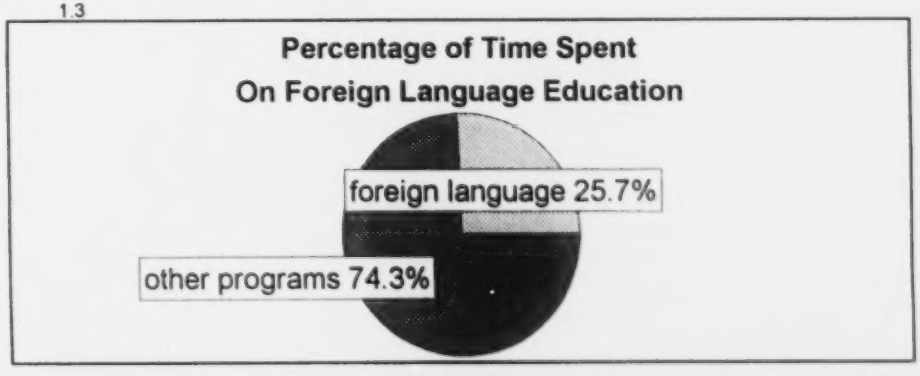
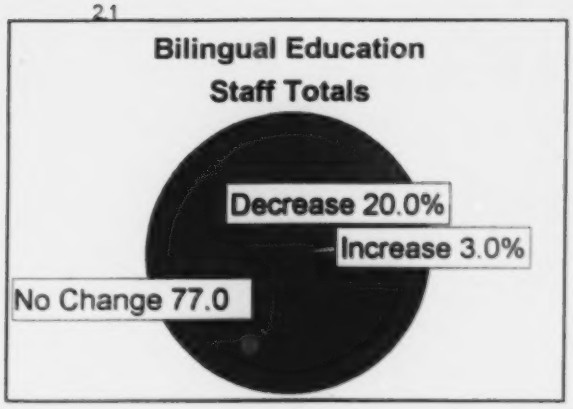
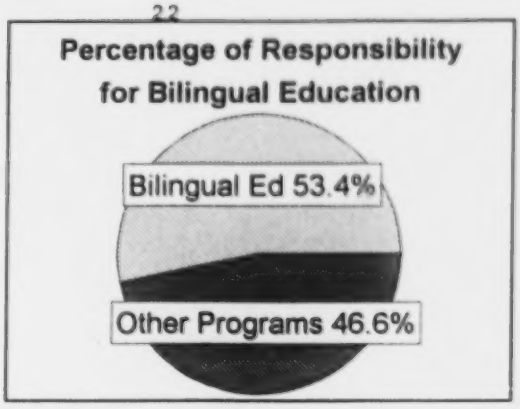


Fig 1.3 Of those employees who divided their time between two or more programs, the average percentage of responsibilities given to foreign language education was 25.7%.

2.1

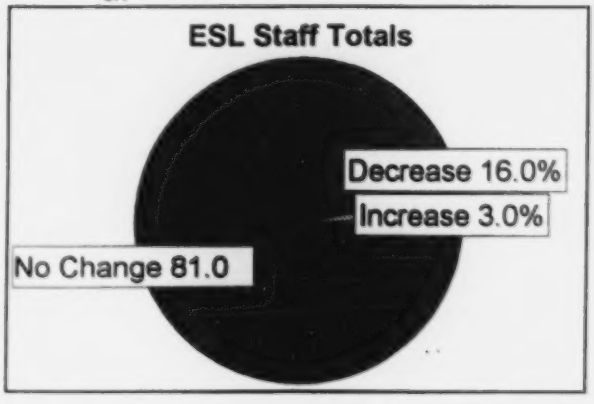


2.2



Figures 2.1 and 2.2 indicate the staffing trends from fiscal year '95 to fiscal year 96 in the bilingual education divisions of the States' Departments of Education. By comparison, job loss was low (20%) and the percentage of responsibility devoted to bilingual education was high (53.4%).

3.1



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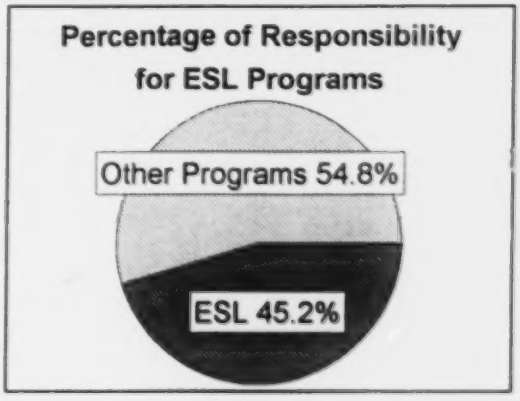

Figures 3.1 and 3.2 demonstrate trends in English as a second language similar to those in bilingual education. At 16%, job loss was relatively low, and like bilingual education, (45.2%) ESL responsibility was high.

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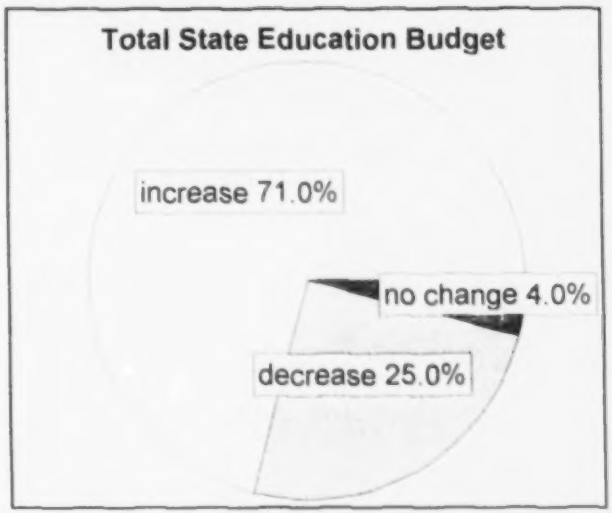
Part II -- Funding

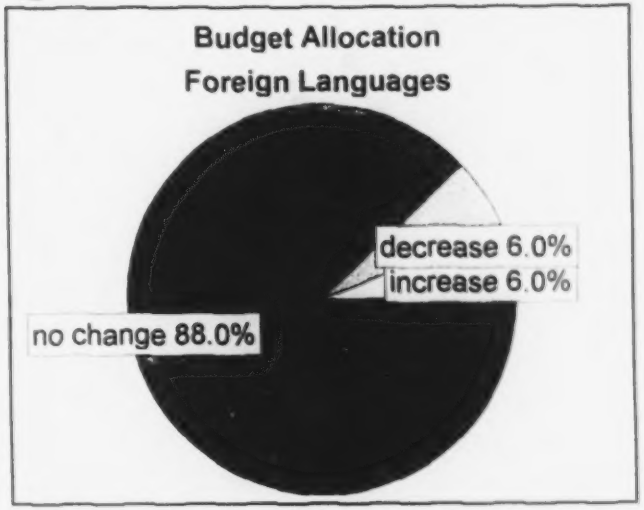
One of the easiest ways to measure support, or lack thereof, for foreign language, bilingual education, and English as a second language policies is to track the funds these programs receive each year. In part II of the survey, respondents were asked to list the total amount for their state's education budget. They were then asked if their state's education budget included funds specifically earmarked for foreign language, bilingual education and ESL programs. Of the monies specifically allocated for each program, the survey asked if the figure reflected an increase, decrease or no change from the previous fiscal year.

In 1996, the average state education budget was over $3.6 billion. This marked a dramatic increase (71%) from fiscal year 1995 (fig.4.1). Seventy-three percent of states did include funds specifically allocated for foreign language programs. The average foreign language allotment was slightly over $550,000, which remained largely the same as 1995 figures (fig. 4.2). While fewer states allocated funds for bilingual education and ESL programs, the amounts given were substantially higher and seriously skewed by a few states. Roughly 63% of all states appropriated funds for bilingual education and ESL, with $11.3 million and $18.6 million budgeted respectively. These figures marked a 40% increase for bilingual education (fig.4.3) and a 55% increase for English as a second language (fig 4.4).

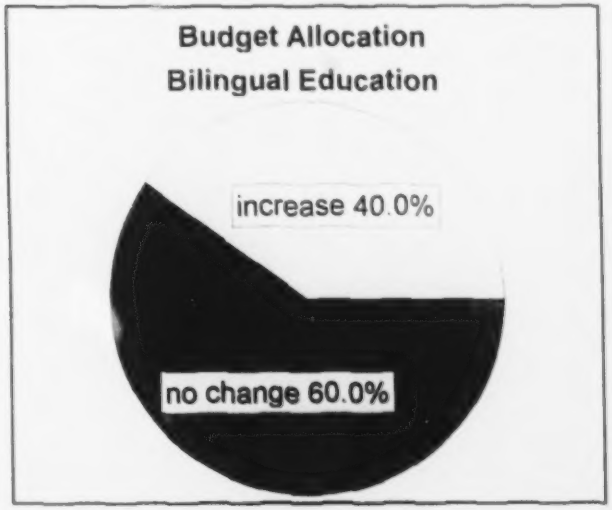
4.1



4.2



4.3



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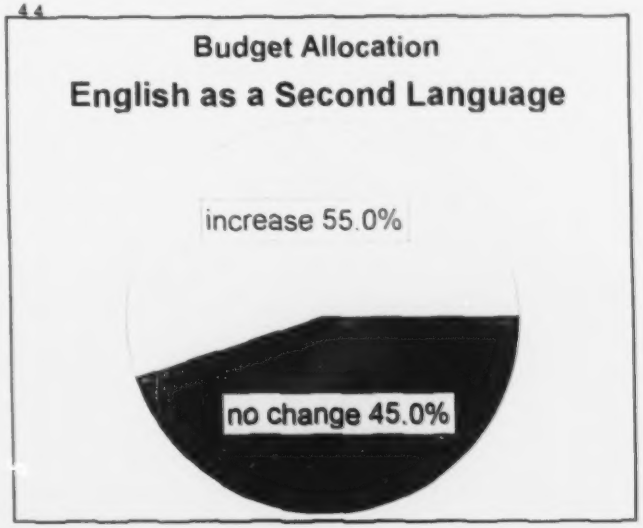

Figures 4.1 - 4.4 indicate educational funding fluctuations on the state level.

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Part III -- Sources of Support

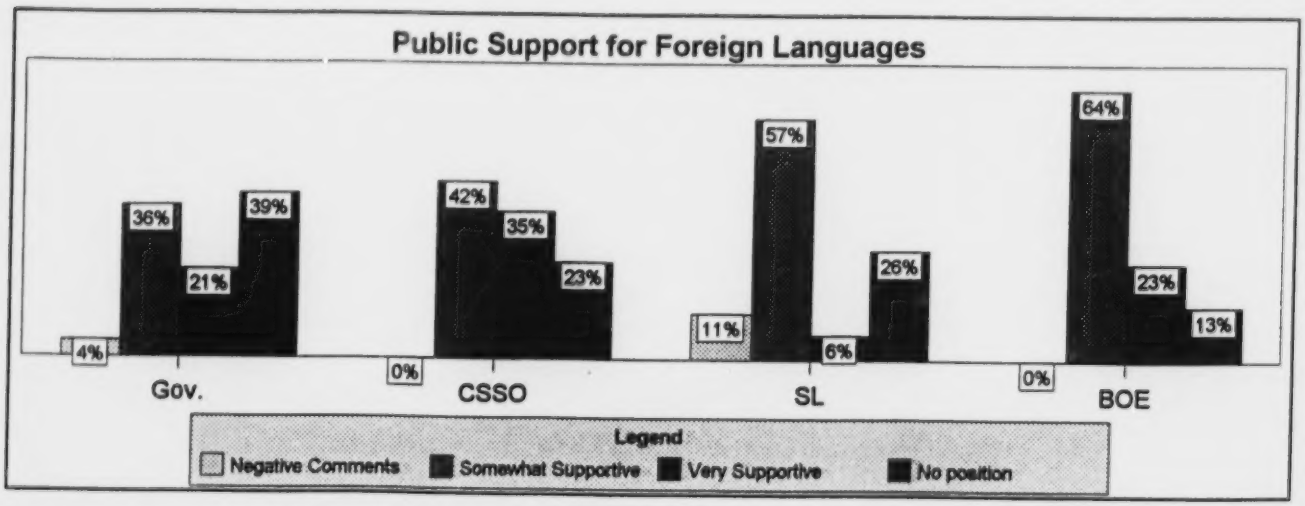
Often, the rhetoric of education policies does not correlate with actual practices. Support might be offered in a speech but never acted upon, or language programs may be publicly attacked but spared in private negotiations. In section III, respondents were asked to rate their Governors, Chief State School Officers, State Legislators, and States' Boards of Education on the public support given to foreign languages, bilingual education and ESL programs. They were then asked to assess the level of agreement between their policy makers' public comments and their actual policy decisions. The ranking scale was four tiered. Policy makers were judged to have commented negatively, somewhat supportively, very supportively, or with no position at all. When asked whether the policy makers' comments matched their rhetoric, respondents were given another four point scale. The second scale included: comments less favorable than policy; comments match policy; comments more favorable than policy; and no comments / cannot compare.

Figures 5.1 through 5.3 reflect the average of the responses. Of the three language disciplines, foreign languages received the largest percentage of public support, both rhetorically and in terms of policy decisions (fig. 5.1). The average support rating for foreign languages was 35.5%, while bilingual education (fig. 5.2) and ESL (fig. 5.3) enjoyed less rhetorical support with average support ratings of 23.4% and 31% respectively.

In foreign language policy decisions, with the exception of the state legislators, there was a consistency between the rhetoric and the policy decisions (fig. 6.1). In the case of the state representatives, their rhetoric tended to be much more biting than their actual policy making. This was also true with state senators, although to a lesser degree. The consistency found between the

governors' comments and their actions appears to be largely due to their reluctance to enter into either discourse or decision making. Similar patterns existed in bilingual education (fig. 6.2) and ESL (fig.6.3). Neither received overwhelming amounts of support from any source and both received a fair amount of public criticism. Of the support that was generated for the two programs, most came from the state boards of education. Again, the biggest critics were the legislators. Half of all governors have taken no public stand on ESL or bilingual education. The need to educate the state's chief executives about the importance of language instruction must become a priority if bilingual education, ESL and foreign language programs are to combat negative public criticism and increase support.

5.1



Gov=Governo ; CSSO=Chief State School Officer; SL=State Legislators; BOE=Boards of Education

Figure 5.1 During fiscal year 1996, the greatest source of public support for foreign languages came from the states' boards of education, while the biggest critics tended to be the state legislators. Overall, the governors held no position.

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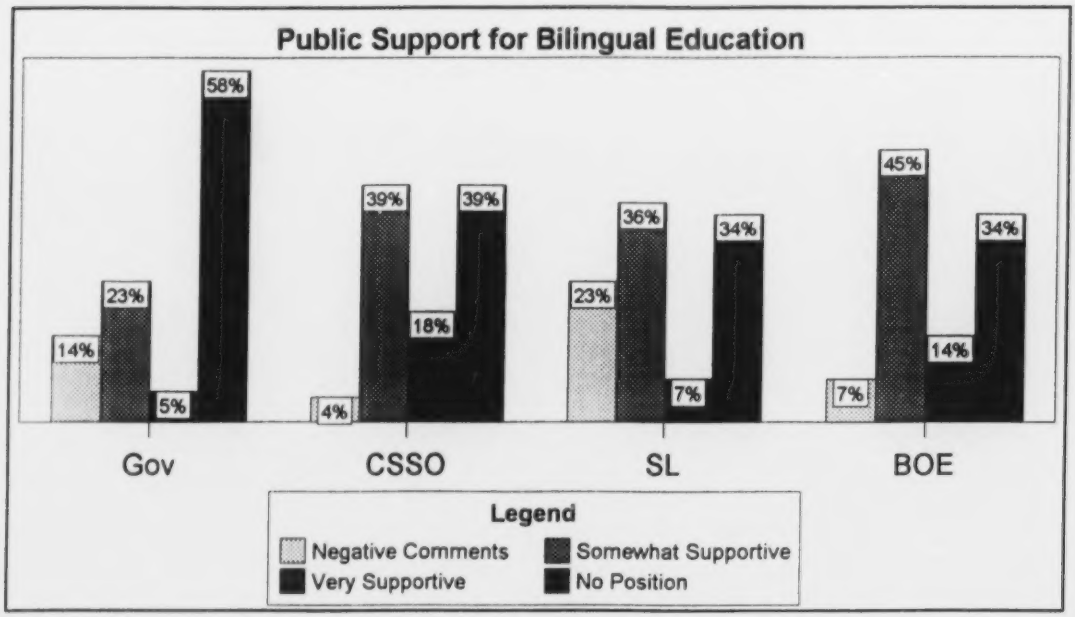
5.2



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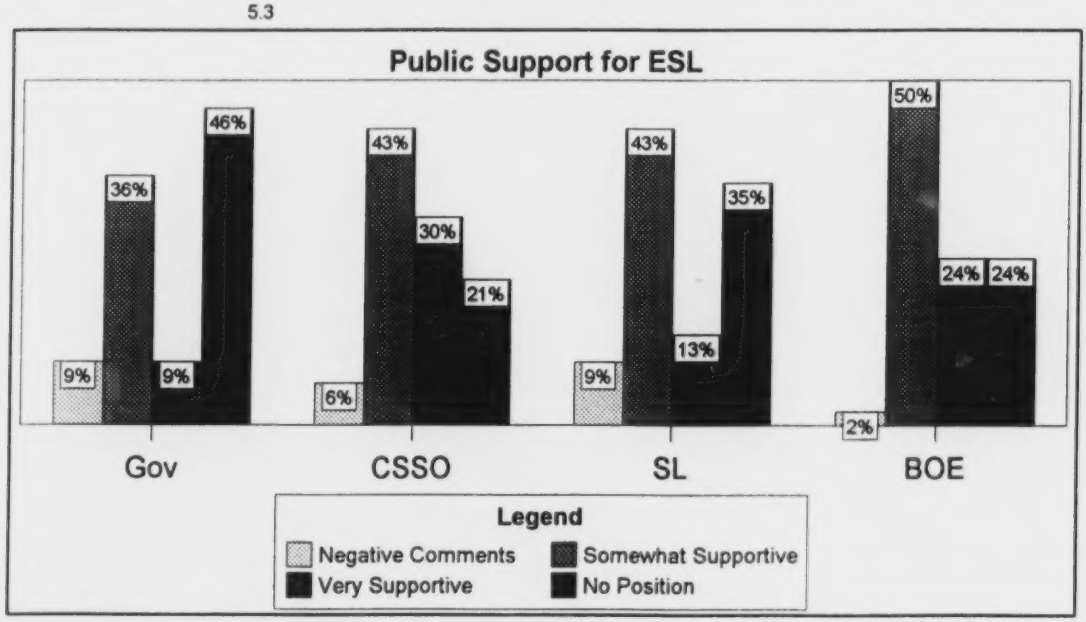
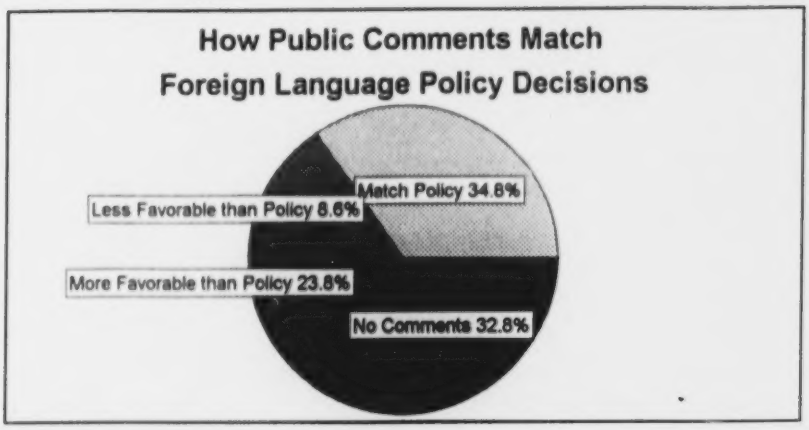
5.3

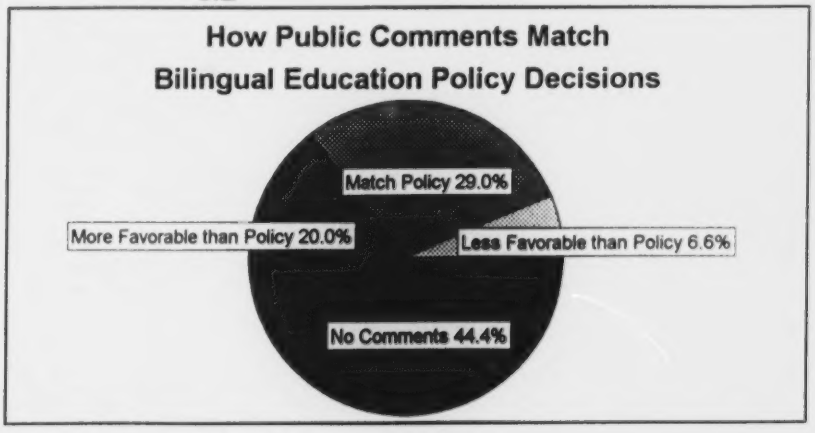


Figs. 5.2 & 5.3 In FY '96 the levels of public support for bilingual education and English as a second language were closely matched. As with foreign languages, the governors generally voiced no position.

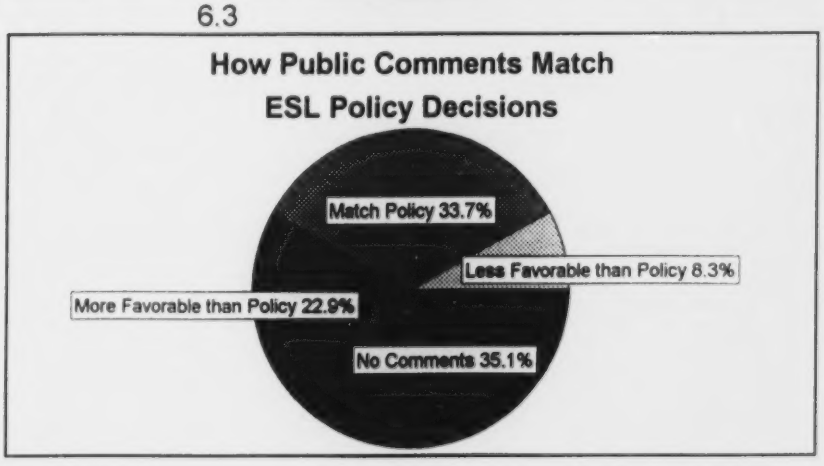
6.1


How Public Comments Match
Foreign Language Policy Decisions
Match Policy 34.8%
Less Favorable than Policy 8.6%
More Favorable than Policy 23.8%
No Comments 32.8%

6.2


How Public Comments Match
Bilingual Education Policy Decisions
Match Policy 29.0%
More Favorable than Policy 20.0%
Less Favorable than Policy 6.6%
No Comments 44.4%

6.3



Figures 6.1 through 6.3 illustrate the level of congruity between policy makers' public comments and the policy decisions they enact and implement.

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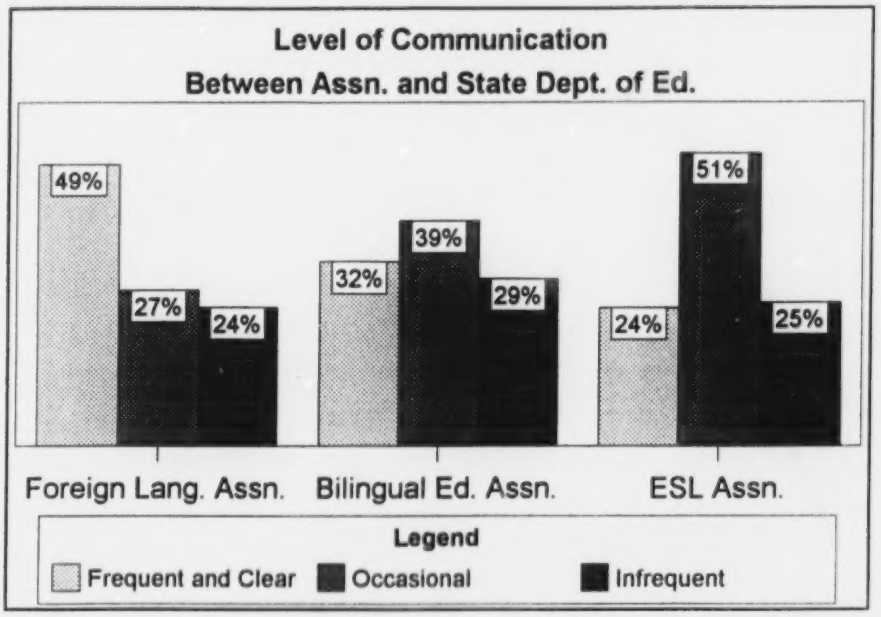
Part IV -- Cooperation

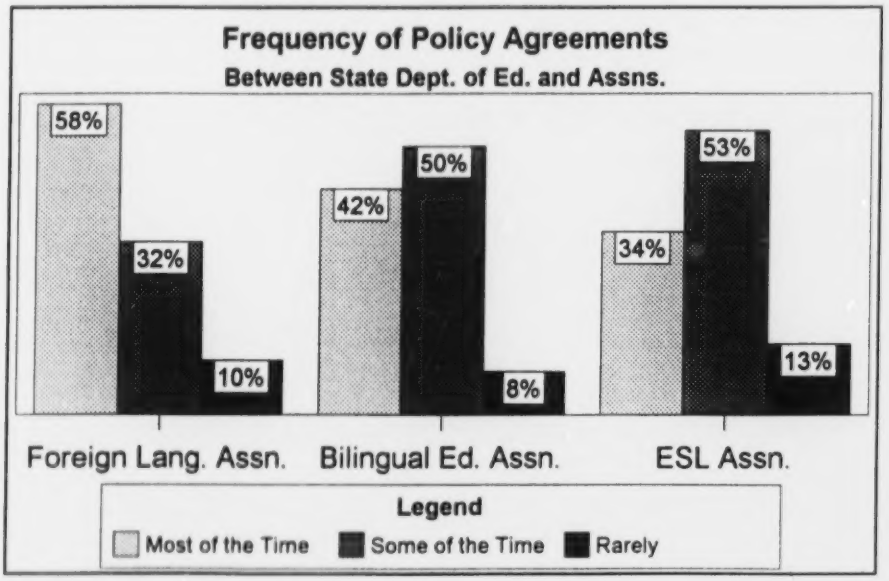
In examining cooperation, we sought to determine how the relationship between the states' departments of education and states' foreign language, bilingual education, English as a second language associations/affiliates affects the policy process. In part IV, respondents were asked to describe the level of communication between their state department of education and their state foreign language, bilingual education, and ESL associations. They were then asked to indicate the frequency with which their department of education and the particular association are in agreement. Using frequency of communication and levels of agreement as a barometer for the nature of relationships, we were able to make a few observations.

Those states reporting the highest levels of communication between their associations and their department of education also reported a higher frequency of agreement on policy issues. While nearly one half of the foreign language associations were reported to have frequent and clear communication with their states' departments of education, only one third of bilingual education associations and less than one quarter of ESL associations enjoyed the same relationship (fig. 7.1). Most often, bilingual education and ESL associations were reported to have only occasional communication. A majority (58%) of respondents said that the states' boards of education and their foreign language associations reach agreement "most of the time". These percentages drop dramatically for bilingual education and ESL (fig. 7.2).

7.1



7.2



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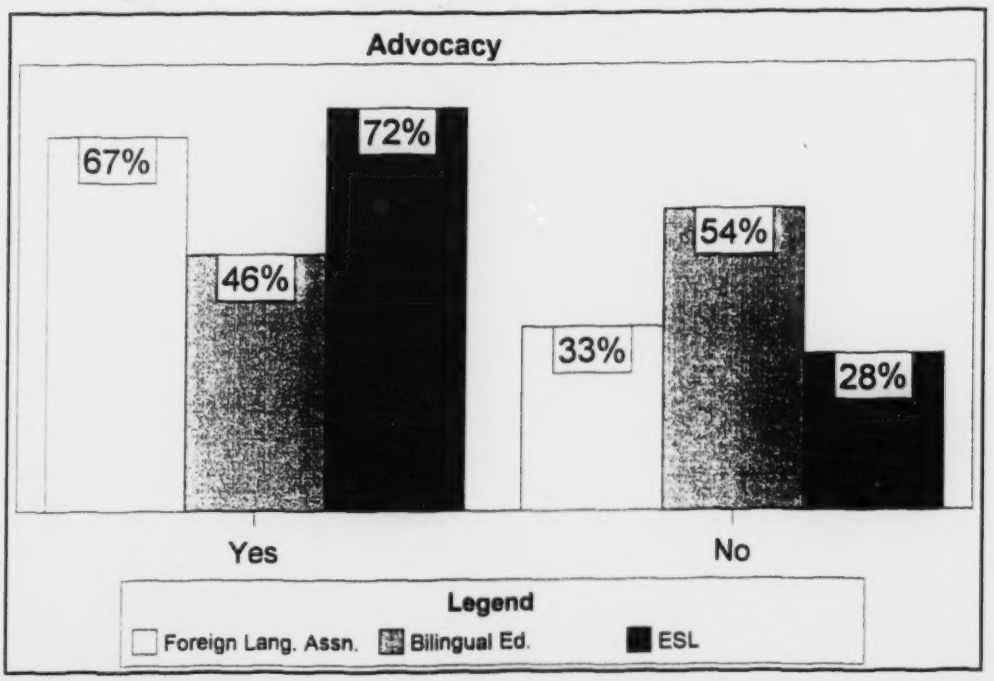
Part V -- Advocacy Efforts

State language associations often need to monitor and respond to changes that will have an impact on language education programs. Some have established political action or public advocacy committees to track pending action, provide information to policymakers, and actively oppose or support legislative measures or executive policy decisions. Data gathered in this section will be useful to those states implementing advocacy strategies. Here, respondents were questioned whether their state foreign language, bilingual education and ESL associations had a public advocacy or action committee for dealing with language education issues. They were then asked if they had taken specific action over the past year to influence policy at the state and/or local level. Those responding positively were then asked the degree to which the action impacted policy.

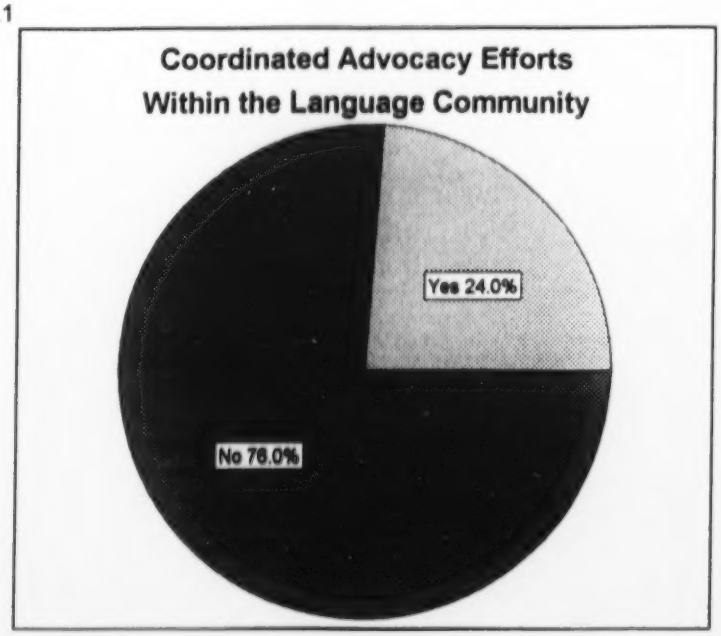
ESL and foreign language associations were more mobilized and active than their bilingual education counterparts (fig. 8.1). By and large, those associations who did engage in advocacy reported activity rates of higher than 80%. Of the advocacy groups reporting activity, 76 to 89% (depending on association) reported having a significant impact on policies at the state and/or local level. The necessity for advocacy groups and political involvement would seem to be strongly encouraged by their rates of success.

8.1

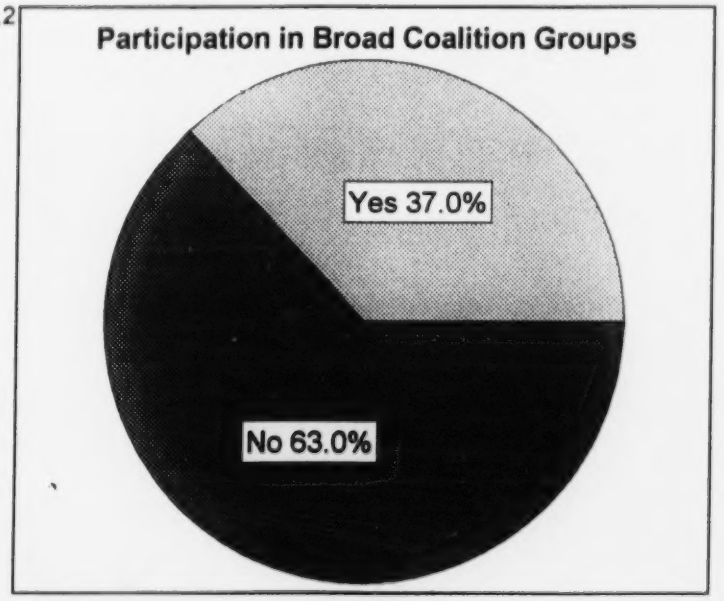


Finally, within the context of advocacy, respondents were asked if the language associations within their state have worked together to coordinate advocacy efforts. Overwhelmingly, the answer was no (fig. 9.1). When questioned about the level of participation in broader coalition groups, again the response was negative (fig. 9.2). In regard to advocacy and political action, there appears to be a need for much greater teamwork within the language community. In fact, language associations work more with other groups than they do with each other.

9.1


Coordinated Advocacy Efforts
Within the Language Community
Yes 24.0%
No 76.0%

9.2


Participation in Broad Coalition Groups
Yes 37.0%
No 63.0%

ADDENDUM

Bilingual Education and English as a Second Language Average Enrollments.

The following are averages of enrollment data within each state:

Question #1.	What is the total K-12 student population in your state?
Average:	932,169
Question #2.	How many limited-English-proficient (LEP) students are there in your state (K-12)?
Average:	99,488
Question #3.	How many students are enrolled in bilingual education programs (K-12)?
Average:	55,763
Question #4.	How many students are enrolled in specific English as a second language (ESL) programs only (K-12)?
Average:	39,053
Question #5.	Does your state have an official policy on the education of limited-English-proficient (LEP) students?
	50% of respondents reported yes.
	50% of respondents reported no.